

WHOSE BATTLE IS IT?

2 Chronicles 20:1-25

Intro: One truth that is very clear in Scripture is that God is to be glorified in all that we are and in all that we do, and especially in all that we do in serving the Lord. The Apostle Peter made this fact very clear when he wrote about the ministry of the Word. I am referring to what we are told in 1 Peter 4:11:

11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Those who minister in the church are to minister the Word of God, and they are to do it for the glory of God. And they are to do it, not in their own strength and ability, but in “the ability which God giveth.” And the purpose in it all is to be that “God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

No man has the right to minister anything but the Word of God, and every man who ministers must look to God for the ability to minister because the object in it all is to glorify God through Jesus Christ. God wants us to know that His work is dependent upon Himself, and not upon us.

So we dare not minister anything but the Word, and our purpose must not be to please people. The whole ministry, the messenger, the message, and the ability the speaker displays must be aimed at glorifying God through Jesus Christ. The preacher is not to attract attention to Himself, or to seek to display His own gifts. All is to be for God's glory. The world doesn't understand this, but we must understand it.

This was not just true for us in these NT times, but it was true also in the OT. One of the most striking examples of this is to be seen in King David. He had so wanted to build a temple for the Lord, but the Lord denied him that privilege because (and this had been God's purpose for David) David had been involved in so many wars. The privilege of building the temple was given to David's son, Solomon. Nevertheless, David said that with all of his might he had gathered the materials that Solomon would use in constructing the temple. And when he said, “with all my might” (1 Chron. 29:2), he indicated that nothing took precedence over that. He worked at it as though it was his life work. The people had given generously, but David recognized that the glory for it all belonged

to the Lord. Listen to what David said after it was all gathered, after the people had given, and the materials were provided for the building of the temple. I am reading from 1 Chron. 29:10 through 19 – truly one of the greatest passages, one of the greatest prayers, which has been recorded on the pages of the OT. Listen to what David said:

10 Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

11 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

12 Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

15 For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

16 O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.

17 I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

18 O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:

19 And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision (1 Chron. 29:10-19)

What a glorious hour that was in the history of the people of God when David refused to take any glory for himself, or any glory for his people,

but gave all of the glory to God.

The Apostle Paul sounded this same note when, writing to the Church at Corinth, he told her people,

31 Whether therefore ye eat or drink of whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31)..

He even defined sin in this way: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). But who can possibly forget that doxology which Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:20-21:

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

But there were many times in the history of Israel when the Lord showed how dependent they were upon Him so that they would truly glorify Him. It is in life as it was in our salvation: we glorify God the most when we are conscious that every blessing we have comes from Him. And so to Him we give the glory. This is what the Apostle Paul was saying as he concluded the doctrinal section of the book of Romans. He wrote:

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom. 11:33-36).

There are times in all of our lives when we have to be reminded of this. Jehoshaphat came to such a time in his life. He was the King of Judah, and he was a good king, a godly king. He really sought to please the Lord. His main weakness was that he felt drawn to two of the ungodly kings of Israel, first, Ahab, and then, Ahaziah. His alliance with Ahab almost cost him his life; the alliance with Ahaziah cost him a lot of money when the Lord destroyed the ships that they had built together. But it was in connection the approach of three great nations that Jehoshaphat was cast upon the Lord as never before. Jehoshaphat knew that Judah was outnumbered, and he was afraid. He knew that his only hope of survival was the Lord. He himself sought the Lord, and he called

people out of all of the cities of Judah to come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord.

In the first 13 verses of 2 Chronicles 20 we have:

I. JUDAH'S DANGER AND JEHOSEPHAT'S PRAYER (2 Chron. 20:1-13).

It is important for us to notice how Jehoshaphat prayed.

First, he prayed himself. Second, he called upon the people to fast, and to come to Jerusalem to pray. That must have been a very solemn time for him and all of the people.

Then, in his prayer he did this:

- 1) He recognized the greatness of God in verses 6 and 7.
- 2) He reminded the Lord of Solomon's prayer when the temple was built. You see this in verses 8 and 9.
- 3) Then he reminded the Lord of how He had shown grace to these same people when the children of Israel came out of Egypt. This is in verses 10 and 11.
- 4) Finally, we come to the heart of his prayer in verse 12. He asked the Lord to judge their enemies, and gave three reasons why. First, because they were powerless before such a large army. He said they had "no might," none at all. Second, because they did not know what to do. And third, because their eyes were upon the Lord. They knew that the huge army was there, but they weren't looking at the army; they were looking at the Lord.

Jehoshaphat did not say that they were going out to meet the enemy, and that He was seeking the Lord's help. That would have been national suicide. No, he confessed their total weakness, and total ignorance, and that the Lord was their only hope for help. He was not asking the Lord to help them defeat the enemy. He was asking the Lord to rescue them from the enemy. It was not that Jehoshaphat was saying that they would do their part, and they wanted the Lord to do His part. Jehoshaphat was asking the Lord to do it all!

Now notice:

II. THE LORD'S ANSWER (2 Chron. 20:14-17).

The Lord doesn't always answer like He did on this occasion, but when the need is urgent, the answer is given in plenty of time. The Spirit of God came upon a Levite by the name of Jahaziel. Twice the Lord told them not to be afraid. See verses 15 and 17. Twice the Lord told the people that the battle was not their's, but God's. See verses 15 and 17. Twice the Lord indicated that "tomorrow" the victory would be theirs because He would be with them. See verses 16 and 17. Finally, they were told in an unmistakable way that the Lord was on their side. As it has often been said, "if the Lord is on your side, it makes no difference who your enemy is."

But now notice a most important result. It was not something that the Lord told them to do; Jehoshaphat and the people did it spontaneously.

III. THE KING AND ALL OF THE PEOPLE WORSHIPED THE LORD (2 Chron. 20:18-21).

What is worship? When our Lord was talking to the Samaritan woman, and she raised the question which had long been debated by the Jews and the Samaritans as to whether Jerusalem was the proper place to worship God, or the mountain of Samaria, the Lord told her not only that the Lord was seeking true worshipers, but that true worship was "in spirit and in truth."

But what is worship? Worship is the manner in which we adore the Lord when we realize that all things come from Him and that our blessings are dependent upon Him. To state it another way, *worship is glorifying God*. And verse 19 tells us that praise is a vital part of worship. We praise God when we believe His promises and know that victory is certain. And the king wisely told his people in verse 20 to continue trusting the Lord and His Word through the prophets. So worship is sustained by faith.

And notice how their fear had been changed into joy. It must have been a very disconcerting thing for the large army which had come against little Judah to see the army of Judah coming out against them led by a choir praising the beauty of holiness and singing, "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever."

Now let us look at:

IV. THE OUTCOME (2 Chron. 20:22-25).

Verse 22 says that “the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, . . . and they were smitten.” Some expositors feel that the Lord sent angels among that three-nation army which so confused them that they began killing each other. Others think that seeing an army come out led by a choir singing praised to the Lord caused uncontrollable panic, and that is what led to their self-destruction. We can’t say for sure what happened except that the Lord gave a most amazing victory. The enemy fought each other until not a single one was left, and it took the people of Judah three days to carry away the spoil. What an illustration this is of being more than conquerors through Him that loves us! Cf. Rom. 8:37.

Concl: We all have been dismayed by the word from the city that we are to vacate these premises, and they have given us until a week from this coming Saturday before we will be subject to fines if we are not gone. We have been praying, and yet more than once some have said to me, “I don’t really know how to pray about this.” Our situation is very different from that which Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah faced in 2 Chronicles 20, but there are some principles that we can draw from this ancient story. Our God is the same God Who helped Jehoshaphat and Judah. He has not changed, nor has His power changed. What we need to realize is that our battle is the Lord’s battle. We are here because He has saved us, and has brought us together as Trinity Bible Church. We have a tremendous opportunity to see what the Lord is going to do. What we need to seek is the glory of God. We don’t have sufficient strength in ourselves, but we have a mighty God. So let us confess our weakness and our ignorance to Him, and tell Him that our eyes are upon Him. As I mentioned in my letter to you, and this applied also to Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah, God not only works *for* us, but He has a continuing work to do *in* all of us. We learn to trust the Lord more, we learn to glorify Him more, and to praise Him more, when we see how He handles a situation which to us is impossible. And when we read our Bibles, we see that it is one of the ways of the Lord to put us in impossible situations so that when the answer comes, we will know that it is the Lord that has done what we have needed so that we will glorify Him. So let’s keep trusting Him, and keep praying, and keep our eyes by faith fixed upon Him. He never has failed us, and He will not fail us now.